The Ten Best American Dailies

Nowhere else can one find so miscellaneous, so various an amount of knowledge as is contained in a good newspaper.
—Henry Ward Beecher, 1887

Fair enough, but what is a good newspaper? It does not help to reverse Beecher's apothegm and define a good newspaper as one that prints a miscellaneous, various amount of knowledge. All papers do that. But if the knowledge is undigested, or simply wrong, more is not better. Journalistic quality is thornier matter. A newspaper in its variety may be superb and terrible at the same time, even on the same page.

Playwright Arthur Miller has a briefer definition: "A good newspaper is a nation talking to itself." But most American papers cannot speak that loudly. The sheer size of the U.S. has precluded the development of a truly national press like Britain's. The New York *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* try to speak to the country at large, but almost all of the 1,760 dailies in the U.S. tailor themselves to the contours of their localities.

Ten years ago, TIME listed its choice of the ten best newspapers in the U.S. In alphabetical order, they were: the Baltimore *Sun*, Cleveland *Press*, Los Angeles *Times*, Louisville *Courier-Journal*, Milwaukee *Journal*, Minneapolis morning *Tribune*, New York *Daily News*, New York *Times*, St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, and the Washington *Post*. Reviewing the nation's major dailies today, TIME correspondents and editors found marked change; five of the 1964 selections have been replaced by other papers that have improved sharply.

These ten papers stand out, in TIME's view, for several reasons. They make a conscientious effort to cover national and international news as well as to monitor their own communities. They can be brash and entertaining as well as informative. They are willing to risk money, time and manpower on extended investigations. Through "Op-Ed" pages and dissenting columns they offer a range of disparate opinion. TIME made its selections on the basis of editorial excellence rather than commercial success, but economically these papers range from the sound to the very prosperous.

THE BOSTON GLOBE

Morning (circ. 293,000), evening (185,000) and Sunday (625,000).

Historically, Boston has been a bad newspaper town. The old saw used to run that the city's best newspaper was the New York *Times*. Some Bostonians might give that title to the widely respected *Christian Science Monitor*, though it is now largely a journal of commentary rather than of breaking news. For nearly a century, the *Globe* offered no competition, but it improved abruptly after Tom Winship, 53, became editor in 1965. The following year the *Globe* won a Pulitzer Prize for its campaign to block a federal judgeship for Francis X. Morrissey, a crony of Joseph P. Kennedy's. Its four-man "Spotlight" investigative team picked up another Pulitzer for a 1971 exposé of municipal scandals in neighboring Somerville. The *Globe*, which had not backed a presidential candidate since 1900, changed policy by declaring for Humphrey in '68 and McGovern in '72. It was the third U.S. daily (after the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*) to publish excerpts from the Pentagon papers.

The *Globe* is known as "a writer's paper"—permissively edited, and allowing a variety of tone and approach. In George Frazier, whose columns are a continuing tirade against lapses in taste, morals and common sense, it has one of the few genuine eccentrics left in daily journalism. Music Critic Michael Steinberg's running quarrel with Erich Leinsdorf's direction of the Boston Symphony was a major factor in the maestro's departure in 1969. Sport Columnist Bud Collins is easily the best tennis reporter in the country.

TOM WINSHIP

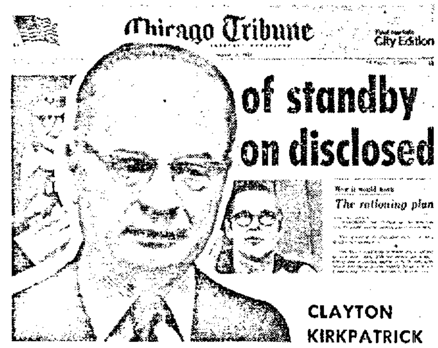
With a five-man bureau in Washington, the *Globe's* national coverage is excellent. It is somewhat weaker in covering Boston's own sprawling suburbs. Overall, the *Globe* is one of the country's most improved papers during the past decade.

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Morning (circ. 681,766) and Sunday (1,157,032).

Gone from the front page are the old-fogyish editorial cartoons, as well as the proclamation that this is the "American Paper for Americans." The comic strip *Moon Mullins* no longer adorns the first page of the sports section, and most of the Shavian experiments in phonetic spelling (*frate* for *freight*) are things of the past. Thanks to its flamboyant longtime publisher, Colonel Robert McCormick, the *Tribune's* history is as colorful as that of any paper in the nation. But its raucous eccentricities have given way to a calmer tone and a less polemical approach to events.

The *Trib* has always excelled at local investigative reporting—for which Chicago provides ample raw material—and it keeps bearing down hard. Under the direction of George Bliss, 55, muckraking teams have scored an impressive number of exclusives, including the Pulitzer-prizewinning exposé of 1972 Cook County vote frauds and an eight-part series on police brutality that resulted in several indictments.



CLAYTON KIRKPATRICK

Major credit for the paper's new orientation goes to Clayton Kirkpatrick, 59, a 34-year veteran of the paper who became editor in 1969. Kirkpatrick toned down the *Trib's* Republican war cries, which were sometimes as audible in news columns as in editorials, and balanced them with other viewpoints. The paper supported Nixon in 1972 but gave regular front-page coverage to McGovern. The *Trib* has occasionally endorsed Democrats for local and state offices. "We are no longer backing a particular point of view all the time," says Kirkpatrick. "We are using balance."

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Morning (circ. 1,036,911) and Sunday (1,226,132).

With the strike-crippled *Herald-Examiner* as its only metropolitan competition, the chief threat facing the Los Angeles *Times* could be lethargy. It is fat (average daily size: 106 pages) but not exactly sassy. It carries more advertising linage than any other U.S.

CHANDLER

continued

daily (1973 total: 117,450,860 lines); yet it gives the impression of just falling short of its great potential. Its metropolitan staff of 96 has problems making sense of its turf—4,800 sq. mi. of overlapping municipal governments that constitute a city editor's nightmare.

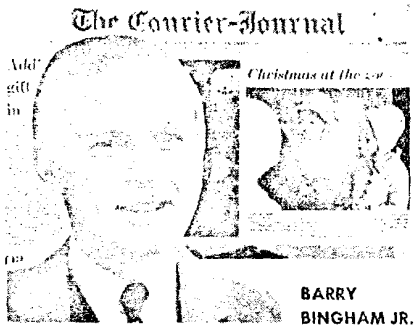
Since assuming control from his father in 1960, Publisher Otis Chandler, 46, has expanded the paper's scope and built up its national reputation. Its network of foreign correspondents is sizable (19), and their files home carry more life than most. In his regular features from Moscow, Murray Seeger offers cross-cultural information in the style of Alistair Cooke. The paper's Washington bureau has had several Watergate scoops, including the first interview with Alfred C. Baldwin, who was manning a listening post when the burglars were caught. That exclusive earned Bureau Chief John Lawrence a 2½-hour jail term after he refused Judge John Sirica's order to turn the interview tapes over to the Watergate prosecutors. With Baldwin's permission, the material was later submitted.

THE LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL
Morning (circ. 230,956) and Sunday (363,917).

The advertisement shows a fist slamming down on a table. The caption: "What this town needs is another newspaper!" Oddly enough, the ad appears in the *Courier-Journal;* it and its sister evening *Times* are the only newspapers in Louisville. This ad was placed and paid for by the *Courier-Journal,* which is uneasy about its news monopoly. A press monopoly is never desirable, but the *Courier-Journal* handles its responsibility well. Its history of enlightened service goes back to "Marse Henry" Watterson, the *Courier-Journal's* first editor in 1868, and later to Publishers Robert and George Barry Bingham, a father and son who played a major role in coaxing Kentuckians into accepting peaceful integration.

Grandson Barry Bingham Jr., 40, the current editor and publisher, has maintained the paper's public-spirited tradition. George Wallace, for instance, has called it the "Curious-Journal" because of its liberal approach to racial issues. On the eve of the second Nixon Inaugural, Bingham editorially urged citizens to march on Washington and demand an end to secret Indochina bombings. The *Courier-Journal* was the first U.S. daily to hire a full-time editorial ombudsman to monitor the paper's fairness and accuracy. It also retains an advertising ombudsman to weed out false or misleading claims.

The paper's state coverage often gets measurable results. *Courier-Journal* stories showing how some back-country lawyers reaped huge profits from miners in black-lung-disease cases are expected to bring legislative action this year. The paper even takes on thoroughbred racing, a sacrosanct Kentucky institution. A 1972 series exposed [illegible]



BARRY BINGHAM JR.

ent conflicts of interest on the part of some racing officials, ownership of a horse by convicted felons and the operations of bookies. The racing hierarchy, was outraged, but reforms were prompt.

THE MIAMI HERALD
Morning (circ. 404,846) and Sunday (507,777).

A cargo plane loaded with Christmas trees crashed into a Cuban neighborhood in Miami one Saturday night last month, killing nine people. At the time, *Herald* Editor Larry Jinks was at a party and the paper had only three men on duty in its newsroom. Upon hearing the news, Jinks took a carload of reporters from the party to the crash site, had 30 men on the story by 3 a.m. Their work, plus five pictures, appeared in nearly one-third of the Sunday morning press run.

Such hell-for-leather legwork has become almost routine at the *Herald,* the strongest link in the Knight newspaper chain.* Pulitzer-prizewinning Reporter Gene Miller has the *Herald's* carte blanche to travel to big stories: the Attica prison insurrection, the Howard Johnson rooftop shootout in New Orleans, the court-martial of Lieut. William Calley. After nearly three years of digging into Miami operations of the Federal Housing Authority, *Herald* reporters tracked down the existence of an alleged political slush fund for Florida Senator Edward J. Gurney. Although the paper backed Nixon in 1972, it has kept reporters busy looking into Bebe Rebozo's Florida finances.

*The other Knight dailies: the Akron *Beacon-Journal,* Boca Raton (Fla.) *News,* Bradenton (Fla.) *Herald,* Charlotte (N.C.) *News* and *Observer,* Columbus (Ga.) *Enquirer* and *Ledger,* Detroit *Free Press,* Lexington (Ky.) *Herald* and *Leader,* Macon (Ga.) *News* and *Telegraph,* Philadelphia *Inquirer* and *Daily News,* and the Tallahassee *Democrat.*

LARRY JINKS

The *Herald* excels in covering Miami's rich ethnic mix: Southern WASPs, Cubans, blacks and Jews. It is particularly alert to its Cuban communities; Reporter Roberto Fabricio spent a week in Spain last year, came back with an exclusive series on some 30,000 Cuban refugees there who were having trouble getting U.S. visas. Many had relatives in Miami. It daily flies 8,000 copies into Latin America, prints eight separate inside editions for the eight areas of southern Florida where it stations news bureaus.

THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL
Evening (circ. 305,005) and Sunday (543,992).

For years the *Journal* was locked in an acrimonious conflict with popular Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier. The paper's extensive coverage of Father James Groppi's open-housing marches in 1967 and 1968 blurred the mayor's liberal image. When the *Journal* later criticized the concentration of all Milwaukee's model-cities strategy inside the mayor's circle, Maier proposed antitrust legislation against the Journal Co.'s news empire (it also owns the city's other daily, the morning *Sentinel,* plus radio, TV and rural cable stations). Yet the paper endorsed him for re-election to a fourth term in 1972, support which

DICK LEONARD

the startled mayor quickly repudiated.

Like 80% of *Journal*-backed candidates, Maier won. But the paper's heavy influence on Milwaukee voting patterns cannot be explained away by its monopolistic hold on the city. It has a long tradition of fair-minded coverage (a recent *Journal*-commissioned poll found that 60% of its readers feel that the paper is balanced. The remainder were evenly split between those who find it pro-Democrat and those who find it pro-Republican). Editor Dick Leonard insists that his reporters keep daily tab on all issues affecting Milwaukee. So close is its monitoring of local government that the pace of city office work slows perceptibly shortly after 1:30 each afternoon when the *Journal* appears —officials are checking to see what their colleagues are up to.

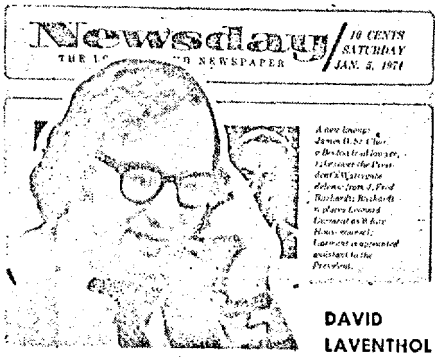
The paper's civic pride can occasionally be cloying. It goes into annual paroxysms of praise over such events as the state fair and the Fourth of July circus wagon parade (sample lead: "The parade wasn't long and the route was

short, but though it does send reporters and editorial writers on international fact-finding tours, the paper's thrust is unabashedly local.

NEWSDAY

Evening (circ. 450,000) and Sunday (360,000).

Newsday is easily the nation's best suburban newspaper. Only 33 years old, it has grown up and prospered with Long Island. Its tabloid format is an innovative blend of newspaper and newsmagazine. The contents conform: heavy on interpretive reporting and features, light on spot or breaking news stories that commuting readers have already seen in the Manhattan press or heard on their car radios. *Newsday* combines solid local coverage with ambitious national and international undertakings. It invested a year of reporting, for instance, to produce a sophisticated 13-part feature called "The Real Suburbia." (Among its findings: suburban housewives "overwhelmingly" say they are happy rather than bored or lonely, most new residents


Newsday

DAVID LAVENTHOL

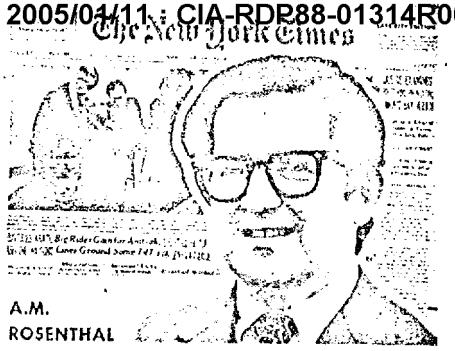
are not driven away by city problems but are attracted to suburban living.)

Owned by the Times-Mirror Co., which also publishes the Los Angeles *Times, Newsday* takes an independent political line. But in recent years it has been no friend to the Republicans. A 1971 series by the paper's investigative team (whose trophy room contains 17 top awards, including three Pulitzers) concluded that some of Bebe Rebozo's financial "deals" had "tarnished the presidency." Perhaps as a result, White House Correspondent Martin Schram was excluded from the President's China trip, and Publisher William Attwood, Editor David Laventhol and Robert Greene, who led the investigation, were all treated to IRS audits of their tax returns. On its way to becoming a paper of national influence, *Newsday* has also built an enviable economic base; it now carries more advertising linage than any of New York City's three dailies.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Morning (circ. 940,027) and Sunday (1,508,116).

There is no other U.S. daily quite like the *Times*. Its total news staff is by far the largest (about 650), its scope and coverage the most extensive. Its influence on national and world leaders


The New York Times

A.M. ROSENTHAL

daunting—as its publication of the Pentagon papers demonstrated.

But under A.M. ("Abe") Rosenthal, 50, managing editor since 1969, the *Times* has loosened up and varied both its appearance and its coverage. Boxed and horizontal layouts now interrupt the long gray columns of old. Perhaps the single most important innovation is the Op-Ed page, an editorial feature that the *Times* did not invent; characteristically, though, its Op-Ed page, introduced in 1970, quickly became a model national forum of contrasting ideas and attitudes. The section is now edited by Charlotte Curtis, 45, who had previously transformed the *Times's* routine women's page into a sophisticated minidaily on modern living styles.

Lately, too, there has been a greater range in the newspaper's tone. John Corry's thrice-weekly column on moods and minutiae of the city is occasionally sentimental, but it is fresh, impressionistic reportage. With a welcome minimum of liberation cant, Judy Klemesrud and Deirdre Carmody have unearthed an impressive number of offbeat stories about how women's lives are changing. Lesley Oelsner has done expert law reporting on such complex issues as court challenges and sentencing and the juvenile justice system.

Since New York is still the cultural capital of the world, the *Times's* critics understandably exert formidable power. Theater Critic Clive Barnes can easily kill a Broadway play with a negative notice, which may be the reason why many readers find his prolix reviews generally far too kind. Ada Louise Huxtable, now part of the nine-member editorial board, is probably the most influential commentator on architecture in the country. The *Times* has also broadened its cultural reviews to include regular coverage of rock and other outgrowths of the counterculture that would not have made its pages a few years back.

The last decade has not all been triumph at the *Times*. It was badly outdistanced by the Washington *Post* on Watergate. Not until the *Times* in 1972 hired Seymour Hersh, who first exposed the My Lai massacre, did its Washington bureau do much in the way of investigative reporting. Shrinking profits have twice prompted Publisher Arthur Ochs ("Punch") Sulzberger to send somber Yuletide messages to employees warning of economies ahead. Its editorial staff has been trimmed slightly. These problems have not substantially affected the finished product. The *Times* is still the nation's single most informative paper, and it is commendably blessed with a passion for accuracy in things both great and small. If gasoline is abbreviated as "gas" in headlines, the word is decorously draped with quotation marks.

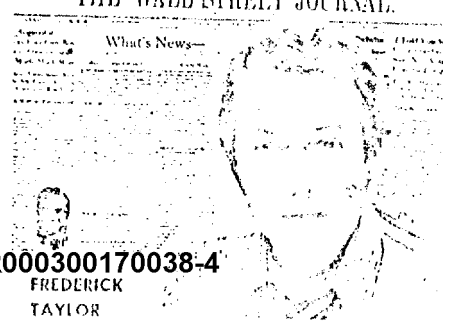
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Morning (circ. 1,300,000).

In 1939 the *Journal* submitted to the Pulitzer Prize board a series attacking antiquated building codes. The material was returned, along with the comment that "trade papers are not eligible for consideration." The *Journal* has outgrown its "trade" classification (it finally won a Pulitzer in 1947), though it is obviously a specialty paper for the business and economic community. It has also emerged as one of the most distinctive voices in U.S. daily journalism. The *Journal's* editorial page is the country's most widely quoted source of conservative opinion. Its front page has a capacity for surprise unmatched by any other paper. News and financial items are ticked off with smart, bulletin-like precision. These columns are bracketed by serious financial comment, offbeat personality profiles and flights of pop sociology. In a given week, the *Journal's* left-hand column will take up subjects as diverse as the trend toward naming rival products in advertising, and the not-quite-emerging nation of Afghanistan (Headline: DO THE RUSSIANS COVET AFGHANISTAN? IF SO, IT'S HARD TO FIGURE WHY).

At a time when any self-respecting paper must do aggressive investigative reporting, the *Journal* ranks high. Jerry Landauer scooped the country last August with the story that Spiro Agnew was under criminal investigation. Stanley Penn has produced major exclusives on the tangled finances of Robert Vesco and Howard Hughes.

The *Journal* publishes four regional editions in nine printing plants across the U.S., runs a mammoth and complicated delivery system to ensure same-day service to most subscribers. The paper still sticks to line drawings in preference to photographs—a tradition that happens to be thrifty and that bypasses pressure to print glossies of executives. In 1972 Managing Editor Frederick Taylor outlawed the word "reform" on the conservative principle that not all


THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

What's News—

FREDERICK TAYLOR

change is for the better. The *Journal* has enormous impact on its main beat. On the day it ran a grim front-page report listing the expected impact of the Arab oil boycott, industry by industry, the stock market dropped 24 points.

THE WASHINGTON POST

Morning (circ. 532,000) and Sunday (701,671).

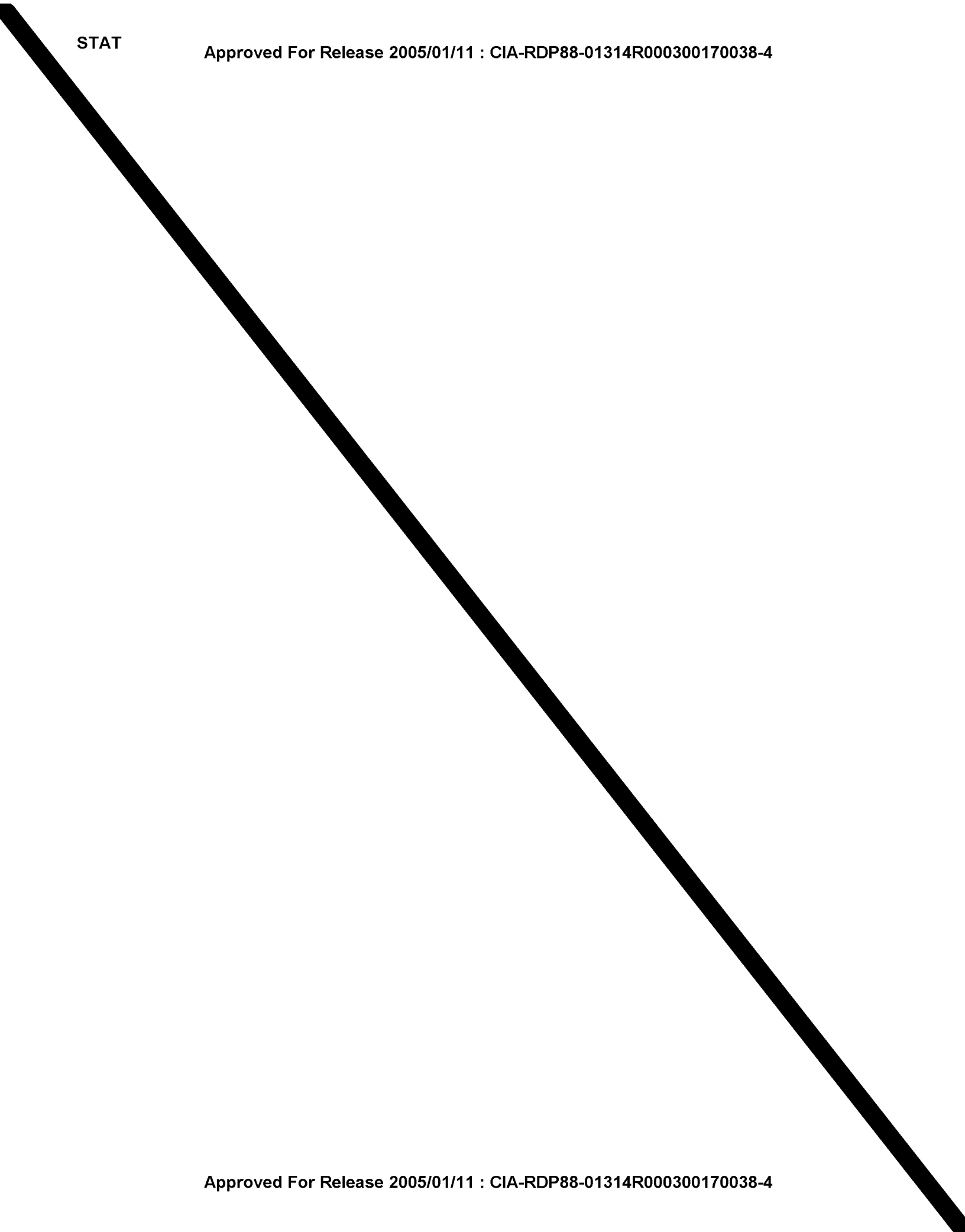
Appearing to speak at schools, *Post* staffers customarily receive standing ovations before they utter a word. Such celebrity for print journalists is unprecedented, but so is the story to which the *Post* led an indifferent nation. Thanks largely to the tireless digging of Watergate Reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the *Post's* work on the nation's worst political scandal has won awards beyond the staff's counting. But obscured by Watergate is the *Post's* broader challenge to the New York *Times* for national pre-eminence. Under Executive Editor Ben Bradlee, 52, the *Post* has tripled its 1965 news budget of $4,000,000, recruited some major talent. Bradlee's news-department staff of 379


The Washington Post

BEN BRADLEE

is still smaller by almost 300 than the *Times's,* but it has a we-try-harder zeal. In one important respect the *Post* is clearly superior to the New York *Times:* its nine editorial writers, led by Editor Philip L. Geyelin and Deputy Meg Greenfield, produce wise, reasoned, dispassionate commentary. The paper's political staff, under Pulitzer-prizewinning Columnist David Broder, is perhaps the most knowledgeable in the country.

Less successful is the style section, of which Bradlee is quite proud. Actually, it is a somewhat erratic blend of the good, bad and incongruous. Columnists Nicholas von Hoffman and Art Buchwald are mixed with meandering reviews of the arts—plus Ann Landers. The *Post* has some trouble serving its fragmented local area; it is not only the sole morning daily in the District of Columbia, its suburban circulation makes it the largest morning paper in Maryland and the largest paper—period—in Virginia. Publisher Katharine Graham has not let the rigors of Watergate coverage stiffen her sense of humor: "Wherever I go, someone inevitably declares that this has been a banner year for journalism and the *Post.* That's true, though in much the same sense that tropical storm Agnes was a good year for disaster agencies."



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